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New Wine in Old Wineskins: the Application of Current Literary Theory to Biblical Narrative Texts.

by

Sandy F. McIntosh ©

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Comparative Literature.

Department of *Modern Languages and Comparative Studies.*

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Abstract:

The literary-discourse oriented approaches to biblical narrative are presented and within this field three primary inner-textual approaches are presented, *rhetoric, narratology* and *the bakhtinian approach*. For these approaches, the significance of the *1 Samuel 1* text as an exemplary narrative is then described and eight examples of critical essays specifically written for *1 Samuel 1*, are examined. The conclusion is that the *1 Samuel 1* text is a useful exemplar in indicating the general usefulness and the limitations of the application of the various literary approaches to biblical narrative.

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I. Literary, Discourse Oriented Approaches to OT Narrative:

A. The basic assumptions of three inner-textual approaches: rhetoric, narratology and the bakhtinian approach

The purpose of this study is to examine the relevance of three modern literary methodologies to the study of ancient *narrative* literature. The procedure to be employed is to examine the results obtained when each methodology is applied to *1 Samuel* 1. By implication, the treatment of this exemplary text will illustrate how other biblical passages can be similarly treated. Ultimately, it is hoped that this will have direct relevance to the examination of all ancient texts, with the methodologies of modern literary studies.

Rhetorical approaches tend to examine the structure of the text in relation to its communicative context, intended impact and wider historical and cultural milieu. Narratological approaches tend to examine the autonomous plot and narration structure, while the formalist-bakhtinian approaches tend to examine the essential elements of several texts and then to categorise them in terms of generic features and affiliations. Both Rhetoric and Narratology examine the structure of the individual text, but with one crucial difference: narratologists begin from a picture of a

complete structure and examine various aspects of the whole, while rhetoricians build a picture of the overall structure in stages as it unfolds. This can be attributed to the rhetorical concept of the text as a sequential persuasive effort which ought to be deciphered or rediscovered.

As mentioned above, if the rhetorical argument of an author is explicitly present in a text, it can be decoded in the order in which it was constructed, because order of presentation plays a crucial role in the understanding of a persuasive argument. For example, Rhetoric allows for an examination of the ways that a horizon of expectations is erected and then fulfilled or thwarted for the narratee. This allows the rhetorical scheme of a text to be decoded as the reading progresses. With Narratology, a structural framework is imposed on the whole in retrospect, based on a prior reading of the entire text. A notion of the text as autonomous from the actual world eliminates the need to discover a persuasive argument or to decipher the structural scheme in stages, as when the text is read in the sequence of presentation. Narratology thus allows for a retrospective examination of the text, after it has been read and schematised.

Feminist and Ideological Narratologies impose an ideological matrix on the entire structure, selecting those elements of

plot, character etc. which are most relevant to the interpreter's rhetoric. The text is used to give support to current ideological arguments rather than to reveal the persuasive effort of the original author.

The Bakhtinian approach begins by expanding the notion of the text to that of an essential utterance. David Forgacs defines the Bakhtinian concept of the utterance as follows:

> The Bakhtinian school theorists were not concerned with linguistics in [the conventional] sense but with the study of language in real social situations, with what they called the study of 'utterance' or 'word' (the Russian term *slovo*, which has connotations of both 'word' and 'discourse', is a central one in the Bakhtin school writings). 'Word' is always a dialogue, and dialogue and the stretch of discourse, rather than the individual speech or the components of a sentence, is really the basic unit of language in the Bakhtin school approach. (192).

This 'word' or 'utterance' can be refracted, or shaped and altered through the medium of characters, including narrator and narratee. For example, the attitude and perceptive ability of a narrative reporter will have a strong influence

on the way a story is told. Gary Morson and Caryl Emerson describe this process of refraction, beginning with the concept of 'dialogue':

> ... it indicates that language is essentially a matter of utterances rather than of sentences; and utterances are by their nature dialogic, in that listeners (or readers) real and potential, shape the utterance from the outset. (65).

B. *1 Samuel* 1 as Test Case:

1. The significance of *1 Samuel* 1 as an exemplary text in the study of biblical narrative:[1]

> Biblical narrative exists mostly in very large units, and the analysis of any sub-unit (by whatever method) must pay some attention to the question: to what extent does the sub-unit derive its meaning from the context? But one can [also] ask the converse question: how does the sub-unit contribute to the meaning of the larger narrative? To this universally familiar issue of 'the whole and the parts', structuralist theory has, we hope to show, something special to contribute. In Piaget's view, a complete, self-regulating system may simultaneously be a part of a larger system (13-16). To make the obvious analogy, a sentence must be built according to rules of well-formedness, while at the same time it forms part of a paragraph or larger discourse. Conversely, paragraphs are made of sub-units, sentences, which satisfy rules of their own, *as well as* rules of paragraph building. (Jobling, 1986, 66-67)

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[1]See the appendix for a complete English translation version of this text.

A fruitful way of comparing the assumptions, procedures and results of the three different approaches is a close examination of their application to the same text. For this study, a passage from the biblical *1 Samuel* chapter 1 is chosen as an ideal exemplary text.

The opening chapter of *I Samuel*, the narrative of Elkanah, Peninah, Eli and Samuel, is the beginning of a long series of historical narratives which start with the conception and birth of the prophetic priestly king maker Samuel and continue through the books of *Samuel* and then through the historical narratives of *I* and *II Kings*. *I* and *II Kings* close their historical accounts several centuries after the birth of Samuel, during the time of Babylonian rule over Israel.

1 Samuel 1 is also a transitional or bridging passage which links the royal history of *Samuel-Kings* with the preceding patriarchal and tribal history of *Genesis* to *Judges* (and the book of *Ruth* in certain traditions). These extended narrative histories are found in the traditional Christian biblical canon, arranged sequentially, but they are not traditionally considered, by critical historians, to have been written sequentially, as divisions or chapters of a single, overarching narrative.

The above understanding of *1 Samuel* 1 as a bridging exposition determines the reading of the larger body of biblical narrative. If the larger narrative texts are seen as chapters in one composition, almost all of the narrative passages in the Hebrew Bible are seen as something similar to one novel. In this case, the literary-structural interpretation of the texts takes precedence over the expectations of critical historians.

It is clear that the opening in *I Samuel* 1 of the extended narrative history is a fairly typical biblical Hebrew exposition which sets the stage for future events. Fewell and Gunn define such a narrative exposition as follows:

> The *exposition* sets up the story world and initiates the main series of events. The situation presented in an exposition is usually characterised by incompleteness, disorder, or unfulfilled desire, from which develops a subsequent conflict. (1024).

The unresolved difficulty with the exposition of *1 Samuel* 1, as mentioned earlier, is that it may be read as an initial or a transitional exposition. In other words, it is either the beginning of one larger narrative or a bridge passage, linking two larger narratives and the conflict, therefore,

may not be entirely 'subsequent'. A third possibility is to read this passage as both initial and transitional.

From the beginning of v3 to probably the end of v7, the text presents an iterative sequence. This is a sequence of events which frequently occurs, on a regular basis, over an extended period of time. In the *I Samuel* 1 text, the events occur during an annual religious pilgrimage. The sequence is framed by the phrases, "Now this man used to go up year by year from his town to worship " (v3) and "So it went on year by year" (v7).

The apparent purpose of the iterative sequence, among the introductory sequences of the larger, primary narrative, is to identify the setting of the events to follow, within the narrative history. The story develops from one of the regularly occurring cycles and therefore all of the cycles, in one iterative sequence, present a historical background for the main events in the narrative.

And now let us proceed to a close examination of the way the narrative of *1 Samuel* 1 is handled by the approaches mentioned above.

2. Rhetorical approaches to *1 Samuel* 1:

***

The term "rhetoric" has many meanings, extending from modern literary criticism to such arcane disciplines as classical jurisprudence. Rhetorical approaches to biblical criticism have been under development for several decades, but these originate from within the domain of historically oriented biblical criticism (although they have a close resemblance to the purely literary discipline of rhetorical criticism). As used here, the term signifies the literary-rhetorical approach to narrative texts which was developed as an approach to modern poetic and narrative literature and has lately been applied to biblical texts. This specific rhetorical approach is exemplified in Wayne Booth's examination of the opening passage of the book of *Job* in *The Rhetoric of Fiction* and is defined in the following citations:

> ... there has been a revival of interest in literature as a verbal act involving communication between author and reader, and this has led to the development of a *rhetorical criticism* which, without departing from a primary focus on the work itself, undertakes to analyze those elements within a poem or prose narrative which are there primarily for the reader's sake. (Abrams,

Rhetorical Criticism, 160)

Rhetorical criticism, sharing the outlook of new criticism about the primacy of the text in itself, and often operating under the banner of 'the final form of the text', concerns itself with the way the language of the text is deployed to convey meaning. Its interests are in the devices of writing, metaphor and parallelism, in narrative and poetic structures, in stylistic figures. In principle, but often not in practice in Hebrew Bible studies, it has regard to the rhetorical situation of the composition and promulgation of ancient texts and to their intended effect on their audience. But, like new criticism, its primary focus is upon the texts and their own internal articulation rather upon their historical setting. (Clines and Exum, 16)

To examine a discourse from the point of rhetoric, therefore, is neither to impugn nor to endorse its message and procedures; it is to consider it in terms of its persuasive power. (Warner, 2).

***

a. Walter Brueggemann's approach: the rhetorical scheme:

A good example of a rhetorical approach to 1 Sam.1 is Walter Brueggemann's *I Samuel 1: A Sense of a Beginning*. The rhetorical tendency of this article is shown in the opening paragraphs, where Brueggemann begins with several references to the actual, authorial source of the narrative:

> [The Deuteronomic authors'] subject is the new narrative of Israel's new social possibility ... They wish to assert that the monarchy did not appear in Israel either because of the initiative of dazzling personalities, not because of large concentrations of ... power, but because of ... Yahweh. (33).

Brueggemann begins by clearly identifying the *1 Samuel* 1 narrative as a persuasive argument emanating from an authorial source in the actual world. His examination of the "internal dynamics" (34) of the narrative begins from that concept. The controlling authorial voice, which attempts to persuade the audience, is manifested in a pattern of rhetoric which can be schematised. Brueggemann seems to accept this authorial voice as a given and concentrates on schematising the "internal dynamics" of the persuasive effort.

One important rhetorical element, however, is missing in Brueggemann's opening paragraphs since there is no consideration of the primary audience of the author's persuasive effort. An author with a persuasive argument must have an intended audience, but Brueggemann does not acknowledge any ancient addressees. Instead, he refers to the modern, Bible reading public as the target of the ancient rhetoric:

> The framers thus have found a subtle and shrewd way to initiate us into subsequent public questions by this intimate tale of fragility, surprise and fidelity. (34).

This passage conjoins an ancient author, a carefully constructed text, and a twentieth century audience, with a gap of about 2,500 years between author and reader. This probably represents an oversight on the part of the commentator, the narrative must have had an ancient primary audience, but it is not necessary for every commentator to consider every issue. Brueggemann's approach is also representative of the theological notion that the Bible has a universal message, that implicitly, the original text was written for the benefit of all humanity, and so for some it is correct to speak of an ancient narrative written for "us". That is to say, the Bible is often read as applicable

to a particular modern audience as a part of the originally intended universal audience.

In conventional rhetorical fashion, Brueggemann reconstructs the pattern of the entire narrative by examining each segment of the argument in sequence. In effect, an understanding of the rhetorical scheme develops as the reading progresses, each new chapter adding to the developing picture until the complete scheme can be envisioned with the completion of the reading. This is different from narratology, where the entire narrative pattern is presented before its constituent parts are examined; the entire text is read before the narrative scheme is delineated.

In Brueggemann's examination of *1 Samuel* 1, the construction of the rhetorical scheme begins with an overview of the entire narrative, in narratological fashion, but this is only a device to show the movement from introduction to conclusion, which illustrates the progressive nature of the rhetorical scheme; "The movement from problem to solution, from barrenness to worship, is narrated in four scenes." (34).

Brueggemann divides the text into four scenes, a short

introduction and a fragmentary conclusion[2]. v1-2 is *the problem of the narrative*, or the introduction. The four scenes are; v3-8 -*an assertion of barrenness*, v9-18 -*an enactment of lament and priestly response*, v19-20 -*an announcement of birth* and v21-28a -*an enactment of thanksgiving*. v28b is the conclusion or resolution to the problem. Each of these four scenes is examined by Brueggemann in order of appearance, without reference to the succeeding scenes. Within this model of reading, comparisons are only made with previous scenes, looking back but not ahead. For example, scene two is added to scene one for a cumulative effect:

> Thus while the two scenes share a common problem, they approach the problem very differently. Scene 1 treats the problem of barrenness as a matter of family struggle. In scene 2 the same problem has been defined in Yahwistic categories of need, submission and trust. (37)

Scene three is then added to the previous two to expand the cumulative effect; "Thus scene 3 resolves scene 1, but only by way of the decisive intrusion of Yahweh through scene 2." (37).

---

[2]In his commentary on 1 and 2 *Samuel*, Brueggemann does not include the conclusion, v28b is included with vv21-28a as part of the fourth scene.

When the final (fourth) scene and the conclusion are examined, a picture of the entire narrative can finally be presented in retrospect. The narratological scheme is found in the concluding summary:

> The conclusion of the four scenes is in v28b: "And they worshipped the Lord there." The subject of the narrative has been radically changed from the problem of v.1-2. Because the problem is barrenness, we expect a conclusion concerning birth. Scenes 1 and 3 stay close to the presented problem and its resolution. The conclusion of worship, however, is concerned with Hannah's relation to Yahweh and more closely derives from scenes 2 and 4, concerning lament and thanksgiving. Thus the *problem (v.1-2) and scenes 1 and 3* utilise the conventional strategy of birth narrative. *Scenes 2 and 4 and the conclusion (v28b)*, reflect a counter strategy that concerns Yahwism and coming to terms with that reality. (39).

Brueggemann's analysis follows a pattern which is clearly rhetorical. It is similar to discourse analysis, in that it constructs a complete narrative scheme from an examination of primary elements, in sequence. Unlike discourse

analysis, it is subject rather than object oriented, in that it deals with the text as conveying the authorial voice of "the framers of the canonical books of I and II Samuel" (33) who "initiate us into subsequent public questions." (34). The text is not examined as a construction of impersonal linguistic elements. It is also not reconstructed from minute elements as small as a word or a phrase, in contrast with discourse analysis. To construct the entire narrative scheme, Brueggemann examines nothing smaller than four scenes and a conclusion.

Brueggemann's methodology also differs from its Bakhtinian counterpart in one important respect, it is subject rather than object oriented. The notion of an authorial voice, expressing its argument through various characters, is similar to the Bakhtinian notion of an utterance refracted through character devices. The difference is that rhetorical characters are perceived as images of character models constructed by the ultimate character, the actual-world author who speaks to an actual-world audience. The Bakhtinian utterance and characters are examined as impersonal objects, similar to the smaller linguistic elements of discourse analysis. The existence of an actual-world authorial voice and audience is a necessary assumption in the Bakhtinian approach too, but it is much less important than in rhetoric.

After the scheme of the entire narrative is constructed sequentially, from rhetorical elements, the picture of the whole can be examined. At this point, it is often difficult to ascertain which methodology a commentator is using, since most methodologies can either work their way up to a scheme of the whole narrative or can simply begin at that point, as in narratology. Brueggemann concludes with a narratological examination of the complete narrative:

> Thus I suggest that the four scenes are arranged in a tightly disciplined quadrilateral with several patternings operating at the same time. (40).

The distinction between rhetoric and narratology here is that the conclusion of one is the starting point of the other. The rhetorical approach builds up to a complete scheme, which then serves as the starting point of narratology, so that the latter can extend farther than the former. While the starting point does not necessarily determine what the conclusion must be, it does anticipate how far the study will progress; the fatigue of writer, reader and publisher will only allow a study to progress so far.

A rhetorical analysis of ancient literature can be different

from a rhetorical study of modern literature and can appear to be more like narratology. This is because an ancient narrated world is often as alien to a modern reader as the ancient authorial-actual world. Narrated characters and actual authors from antiquity are equally distant from a modern reader. A rhetorical study of an ancient narrative must therefore account for an ancient authorial world which is constructed by historians and archaeologists and which is sometimes less understood than the narrated world of the text. Thus Brueggemann's conclusion, "As we pursue the sustained narration of I and II Samuel, we watch how the literature moves and how Israel's history is shaped." (47). The modern actual world of the reader appears to be equally distant from both the ancient narrated world and the actual ancient world. This may be seen as an attempt to promulgate a particular theological application from the reading of the text.

b. Lyle Eslinger's rhetorical / structuralist approach:

Eslinger's methodology has the identifying marks of several structuralist and formalist approaches. The opening paragraphs present a picture of the entire narrative, allowing the constituent parts to be examined as elements of a complete structure:

> To avoid this problem - losing sight of the forest for the trees - it seems advisable to provide the reader with a summary of the narrative, a literary map to lead him or her through the mass of detail to follow. (cf. Conroy 10)[3]. The summary is the product of several readings of 1 Sam 1 - 12. The reader who has not had a chance to read chs. 1 - 12 through several times can use the summary as an introduction and as a contextual guide for checking his or her understanding at any point in the study. (55).

This is very reminiscent of narratology, and from this picture of the whole, it is reasonable to expect an examination of the entire narrative structure. (Of course there is the possibility that it is just good pedagogy.) However, the introduction, with its picture of the whole is followed by another short introduction which outlines a

---

[3]In his commentary on the four books of Samuel and Kings, Conroy relates the *1 Samuel* 1 narrative both backwards and forwards to other events within the larger narrative:

> While this division could be termed the *Infancy Narrative of Samuel*, it also contains elements that look far ahead to later texts [p19] ... It is not uncommon in the Bible that the future greatness of a person is shown to have been foreshadowed in the unusual circumstances of his birth ... [and looking retrospectively,] The similarities to the story of Samson's birth (Judg. 13) prepare the reader for the presentation of Samuel as the last and greatest of Israel's judges or deliverers (cf 1Sam 7) before the change to the monarchial form of government. (21).

different approach to the narrative:

> Rather than analytically separating the different aspects of narrative composition that create its meaning, as Conroy has done in his innovative study of 2 Sam 13 - 20, I shall follow the order of the text and discuss any feature of the narrative as the occasion arises. Separate treatment of the various literary phenomena, though suitable for attempts to compose a biblical narratology, detract from the comprehensive understanding of a narrative when the goal is interpretation. The focus of this study is not biblical narrative in general, but the specific narrative ... (63).

This progressive construction of an understanding of a narrative resembles the common practice of both discourse analysis and rhetoric. However, discourse analysis is quickly eliminated as a possibility in this case, when the meaning and message of the text is examined within the larger context of all OT / Hebrew Bible historical narratives, leading to Eslinger's 'interpretation'. This is an effort to assign the *1 Samuel* 1 passage a significant place within a larger rhetorical context:

> Given the other similarities between Samuel's and Samson's birth stories (cf McCarter 1980:64-66), and the fact that one of the four roles (priest, judge, prophet, and seer) that Samuel plays is that of a judge (ch. 7, esp. vv. 6, 15 - 17; 8:1 - 5 [by implication]; 12:11), the connection between 1:1 and the stories of the judges seems to be in accord with the conventions of the scene as a whole. The story about to be told should, therefore, be read in the light of the prior stories of the judges (cf, Schulz 1919:2). (66).

This description of generic relationships within a family of texts also resembles a classical form-critical reading.

Eslinger's study of *1 Samuel* 1 continues and then concludes by identifying the 'authorial narrator' and the reader, and describing the communication between both parties. If these parties are not accepted as actual historical figures, i.e. if they are merely placed within a fictional story realm, Eslinger's work can be read as structuralist narratology which resembles a rhetorical study in its progressive examination of the text:

> A ... very important implication of the temporal distance between the events of the narrative and

> the end of the narration is that the narrator thereby indicates his position beyond the world he describes ... The reader, who perceives and comes to understand the narrated events only as they are presented by the narrator is thereby also placed in a position of conscious superiority to the characters and exteriority to the story.
>
> This definition of the relationship between the narrator and reader ... is an important function of the preterite introduction. The importance of this definition for the proper understanding of the narrative cannot be overemphasised. All subsequent features of the narrative, such as the presence of conflicting evaluations and viewpoints within the narrative, are subject to this basic framework. (67 - 68).

Eslinger's study of *1 Samuel* 1 illustrates the inherent weakness of precise categorising or 'pigeon-holing' of literary criticism. No one is required to follow a prescribed and constricted path in literary studies. However, Eslinger's work can be described as primarily rhetorical but shading into narratology, thus drawing on either according to the immediate question at hand.

c. Robert Alter's new critical and rhetorical approach:

Robert Alter is recognised as one of the originators of the study of biblical narrative as literature. His book *The Art of Biblical Narrative* is often referred to as a seminal work in the field. This book contains a fairly extensive examination of the greater part of *1 Samuel* 1 (to v19) in the chapter entitled "Between narration and Dialogue", which examines the structure of biblical narratives. The focus of attention is on the elements of the narrative discourse, with very few references to the historical origins of the textual material. The emphasis is thus on the narrated world, rather than on the actual world.

Alter examines the structural elements of the narrative in a sequential reading, and a picture of the entire narrative is assembled from an examination of these small, even minute elements. These elements of the *1 Samuel* 1 narrative are presented sequentially, in small textual passages. Each of these is examined exhaustively before the succeeding passage is presented, in a manner that is conventional for both biblical running commentaries and new critical close readings. However, at the end of the chapter, Alter departs from the pattern of a close reading and presents a retrospective summary and analysis of the entire narrative.

The summary and conclusion to Alter's chapter depart from the pattern of a sequential close reading and examine the entire narrative retrospectively and selectively. It might be more accurate to say that the results of Alter's new critical close reading, rather than the actual text, are examined in this way.

The literary approach employed in the conclusion is clearly rhetorical. The intentions of the Hebrew biblical authors are described and contrasted with the rhetorical intentions shown in the works of the nineteenth century French novelist Flaubert. Alter's emphasis is on the narrators -*who speaks*- and not on the narratees -*who is spoken to*-, thus the primary rhetorical issue is authorial intention:

> The key to these concerted means for the rendering of a narrative event is the writer's desire to give each fictional situation, with minimal authorial intrusion, a marked thematic direction as well as a moral-psychological depth. (86).

and

> ... the writer must permit each character to manifest or reveal himself or herself chiefly through dialogue but of course also significantly through action, without the imposition of an intrusive apparatus of authorial interpretation

> and judgement. The Hebrew narrator does not openly meddle with the personages he presents ... (87).

Throughout his analysis, Alter frequently identifies and examines two literary forms, *-type scenes* and *-the differentiation between pairs of forms*. The biblical narrative is examined as if it were a modern novel or short story and literary approaches to narrative texts from other branches of literature are applied directly to biblical passages. This is in contrast to much current biblical criticism which stems from a historical-critical approach to the texts and has been developed specifically for biblical narratives (and mostly OT narratives). Alter does not employ an approach which was originally developed for application to the Bible.

An examination of type scenes, which presumably were familiar to the original audience, illustrate how the narrator raises expectations for the narratee and then fulfils or thwarts them. For example:

> "This entire interweaving of exposition, narration proper, and dialogue is executed within a frame of expectations set up by the annunciation type scene." (85).

and

> For a moment, it may appear that Elkanah will be the protagonist - the patriarchal convention of biblical literature requires that the opening formula be "there was a man," not a woman ... but the story of Hannah about to be told to us is, if anything, a matriarchal story (82).

Also, the anticipated commencement of a temporal narration is delayed when it seems that it is about to commence:

> With this indication of habitual action ... it would seem that the exposition is over and the main plot will now be taken up (82). The "One such day" ... makes us think that the story proper has begun, but verse 7 clearly announces that the little drama of the sacrificial portions and the confrontation of co-wives was habitually enacted, from one year to the next. This places the action reported in these verses in what one might call a pseudo-singulative tense. (82-3).

The expectations for a conventional patriarchal type scene are erected and then thwarted through the substitution of a matriarchal narrative. The apparent closing of an iterative-temporal exposition is unexpectedly delayed,

allowing for the patriarchal figure of Elkanah to be backgrounded and his wife foregrounded. When the temporal narration finally commences, it is Hannah's story and not Elkanah's.

Alter also employs various techniques common to new criticism, with its emphasis on the language of literature and on the contrast between differentiated forms. Abrams defines these elements of the new critical approach:

> The basic components of any work of literature ... are conceived to be words, images and symbols ... These linguistic elements are often said to be organised around a central and humanly significant theme, and to manifest "*tension*", "*irony*", and "*paradox*", within a structure which is a "reconciliation of diverse impulses" or an "equilibrium of opposed forces." (223).

Alter's examination of *1 Samuel* 1 clearly parallels this definition. One set of differentiated pairs which is examined is Hannah and Eli and their dramatic intersection which is played out around the central theme of an annunciation story. For example:

> The ensuing dialogue between Hannah and Eli

> exploits the principle of character differentiation through contrast that we have observed in other passages. After Hannah's naive speech, Eli expresses his mistaken rebuke in verse-like parallelism which in its formality resembles the beginning of a prophetic denunciation (84).

The examination of the polarisation of these two characters reveals the irony in the blessing that Eli gives to Hannah:

> The particular form taken here by the annunciation is virtually ironic ... the house of Eli will be cut off, his iniquitous sons will be replaced in the sanctuary by Samuel himself, and it will be Samuel, not his master Eli who hears the voice of God distinctly addressing him in the sanctuary. (86).

Alter's approach emphasises the tension and irony in the relationships between pairs of characters in a way which clearly exemplifies a new critical explication.

3. Excursus: Between Rhetoric and Narratology: The narrator's knowledge and insight in *1 Samuel* 1:

One central issue to both rhetorical and strictly

narratological analyses is the authority, the amount and kinds of knowledge the narrator possesses with respect to narrated events and characters, and especially his or her access to the minds of the characters. Drawing on general narratological and rhetorical analyses (Booth, Chatman) as well as on Eslinger's more specific observations, it would be interesting to see what they reveal about the unnamed narrator of *1 Samuel* 1.

The structure of the exposition of the *I Samuel* 1 passage commences with a presentation of the character of Elkanah; "There was a certain man of ... a ... from ... whose name was ... son of ... an ... He had two wives ..." (1:1-2). The information about Elkanah is archival, information which could have been known without actually meeting Elkanah. With the exception of thoughts from the mind of God, the *I Samuel* 1 narrative is set in the terrestrial world, there is no description of normally inaccessible ontologies, and all the action takes place in a very few locations in the ancient land of Israel.

Characterisation within the narrative in *I Samuel* 1, is best examined by considering the character of Hannah. Other characters such as Elkanah and Peninnah are also developed, but Hannah is given the most complete portrait. Outside of the archival exposition, where it is merely recorded that

she had no children (v2), the record shows that, "the Lord had closed her womb" (v5) and "She was deeply distressed" (v10) and in reference to her, Elkanah loved her (v5); which is all information available only through privileged access. Also, although her prayer is recorded for the reader, the author states; "Hannah was praying silently; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard" (v13). Only in the case of the most fully developed characters must the reader trust the narrator of *I Samuel* to tell us what no eye witness could know.

A simple way to schematise the variations in the rhetorical style of *1 Samuel* 1 is to arrange them on a line representing a continuous spectrum. Using the example of characterisation, on the one extreme would be the characters who are transparent in every way. In modern novels, it is almost a rule that the thoughts, emotions and sentiments of the characters can be read. This is similar to Hannah's 'silent' prayer, which is recorded in writing but was inaccessible to any other character. On the other extreme of the spectrum are narratives with characters who are only externally perceived. These are only heard and seen with something like normal human perception, similar to a theatre audience watching a dramatic play. This scheme appears simple, but it runs into complications in many narratives. For example, it is common for many writers to develop

complex characters who seem to be only externally perceived. Many playwrights, including Shakespeare, present characters who are only perceived through external dramatic actions and words, yet the audience receives an intimate portrait of the character's psychology. One biblical example of this is Elkanah's attempt to comfort his infertile wife, which reveals something of the inner man:

> Hannah, why do you weep? Why do you not eat? Why is your heart sad? Am I not more to you than ten sons? (v8).

In *I Samuel* 1, the degree of privileged access to the characters indicates their relative importance. Peninnah's children are only unnamed passive recipients, perceived only externally and with little clarity, while Peninnah is named and acts assertively. Elkanah is named, he acts and speaks, and also loves (v5). Similarly, Eli acts, speaks and also thinks (out loud for the reader). But the greatest amount of privileged information is presented about Hannah. Her silent prayer has been mentioned, which was partially recorded in the text but was unknown to Eli, sitting nearby and watching her closely.

One could generalise and claim that heroic characters like Hannah are privileged, being perceived with unnatural

PERCEPTION OF THE CHARACTERS:

internal perception — external perception

H — E — Ek — P — ch

Hannah Eli Elkanah - Peninah - P's children

clarity while villains like Penina are given a severely restricted voice, and kept in a perceptual darkness. In the rhetoric of the narrative, Hannah is elevated and idolised while Penina is denigrated. Hannah is correct, Penina is incorrect and this status is inferred by the narrator's representation of the characters, and not only from what either character says or does.[4]

4. Structuralist - Narratological treatments of *I Samuel* 1:

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Structuralist theory concerns itself with patterns of human organization and thought ... In literary criticism likewise, structuralism looks beneath the phenomena, in this case the texts, for the underlying patterns of thought that come to

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[4]Of course the description of Peninah as a villain depends on a simple reading of the text. A complex analysis of the narrative structure can reveal a more complex actantial role for a character such as Peninah. (See Prince: "actant", "actantial model", "actantial role" etc.)

> expression in them. Structuralism shades off on one side into semiotics and the structural relations of signs, and on the other into narratology and the systems of construction that underlie both traditional and literary narratives. (Clines and Exum, 16)

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a. Joel Rosenberg's narratological approach: A rare example of an extensive narratological approach to the *1 Samuel* 1 passage, with no overt ideological stance on the commentator's part, is found in Joel Rosenberg's commentary, *1 and 2 Samuel*. This commentary concentrates on the roles and interrelations of the main characters as narrative agents in a well defined *plot* pattern which, in turn, embodies a clear rhetorical or ideological message. Rosenberg situates the female character Hannah within a collection of other characters and events; "Indeed, the ensuing narration makes it clear that Hannah's triumph and Samuel's entry into priestly service coincide with the house of Eli's fall from divine favor." (124).

Hannah is presented as a small player in an epic drama of clashing dynasties, she is merely one of the constituent elements within the larger narrative. Rosenberg begins his examination of *1 Samuel* by laying out a rudimentary narratological scheme for the entire drama. He relates this

scheme to a similar pattern in *Genesis* and shows that it is seminal to all the narrative history of the Hebrew Bible:

> *Samuel* most resembles *Genesis* with its preoccupation with founding families and its positioning of these representative households at the fulcrum of historical change. As in Genesis, the fate of the nation is read into the mutual dealings of spouses, parents and children ... Thematic movements fall into place through a series of overlapping and interlinked codes ... in which shifts occur nonchalantly and elliptically, as if the premises of their alternation were already clear from long tradition. (6).

While feminist narratologists look for narrative elements relevant to a debate within twentieth century western society, Rosenberg identifies one of the primary patterns for narratives in the ancient near east. Female characters, such as Hannah, are essential matriarchal figures in a kind of dialectic process. The matriarch interacts with the patriarchal figure to produce an offspring, which leads to an ensuing dynasty. Hannah is vital to the male-female, thesis-antithesis interaction which produces the synthesis, the child Samuel. The discussion is not complete if only the role of the matriarch is examined.

As Rosenberg states, it appears that the premises of the ancient codes were well understood, in their day. They are not emphasised in a way that indicates novelty or surprise and the theme of founding family-succeeding dynasty is a foundational narrative structure in the Hebrew Bible. This establishes the essential premises and rules of the story world, and subsequently, the narrative always conforms to the legacy of the founding principles. Some of the rules of the story world are established in the initial narrative and these function as immutable natural laws of the story world.

The indications that this narrative structure was well established are: -the frequency of its use, it is often used in the Hebrew Bible; -the minor variations, the theme is often altered and played with. A few examples can illustrate these two points; the story of Adam and Eve is quite conventional with its husband, wife and descendants, but an unconventional variation is found in *Judges 17*, where the patriarch is a man, Micah, the matriarch is his mother but the interaction between them is not sexual but rather a complicated account of theft, repentance and reconciliation. When Micah returns some gold coins which he stole from his mother, she has them made into a religious cult object. The object is the child-synthesis and the ensuing 'dynasty' is the enduring legacy of a rival cult to the true faith which originates from Micah's cult object. This thematic dynasty

remains as a background premise to the end of the biblical narrative history.

In some cases, an apparently important male character is relegated to being a mere procreator, a biological necessity, and not a major player in the dialectic process. The male procreator is not always the patriarch like Adam or Abraham. In the story of Ruth and her mother in law Naomi, the death of Naomi's husband and sons propels her into the position of clan patriarch. Through Naomi's machinations, a husband, Boaz, is found for Ruth, the matriarchal figure. The child of Ruth and Boaz is identified as belonging to Naomi, "A son has been born to Naomi." (4:17). The succeeding dynasty is more conventional, it becomes the royal davidic family which dominates the narrative history to the end.

In this light, it is possible to identify Hannah in the *1 Samuel* 1 narrative as a matriarch and Eli as her patriarchal counterpart. The interaction between the two is conversational and religious rather than sexual, while Elkanah functions as the necessary procreator and the source of a respectable patriarchal lineage for the boy Samuel, God functions as the primary agent of procreation (v19, "Elkannah knew his wife Hannah, and the Lord remembered her."). The synthesis of this interaction, Samuel, leaves

no dynasty of his own, but establishes the davidic dynasty as his enduring legacy. Samuel's legacy continues to the end of the narrative of Israel's royal history.

Each dialectical interaction initiates an essential part of the narrated world, embodying premises and rules that establish patterns to which the ensuing narrative conforms.

b. The relevance of feminist-womanist narratology:

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> Feminist criticism can be seen as a paradigm for the new literary criticisms. For its focus is not upon texts in themselves but upon texts in relation to another intellectual or political issue ... The starting point of feminist criticism is of course not the given texts but the issues and concerns of feminism as a world view and as a political enterprise. (Clines and Exum, 17).

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A consideration of feminist narratology is important in examining the narratological approaches to *1 Samuel* 1, considering the prominent roles of feminine characters in the narrative. Within the field of narratology, there is considerable debate about the legitimacy of feminist narratology or any related approach to literature which

associates theoretical narratology with ideological concerns. Susan Lanser engaged in a debate with Nilli Diengott on the question of whether or not the scope of narratology is broad enough to include a subject oriented and rhetorical feminist narratology. Lanser acknowledged the narrow definition of narratology as object oriented and structuralist:

> The tendency to pure semiosis is both cause and effect of a more general tendency in narratology to isolate texts from the contexts of their production and reception and hence from what "political" critics think of as literature's ground of being - the "real world." This is partly a result of narratology's desire for a precise, scientific description of discourse. (*Toward a Feminist Narratology*, 344).

She also appeals for an expanded definition of narratology which could include ideological and rhetorical interests:

> My intention is not to quarrel with or even to advance any particular definition of narrative, but to suggest that instead of considering narrative poetics in the narrowest possible way, one might consider it in the broadest, so that

> narratology would be "interested in" any element of discourse that contributes appreciably and regularly to the structure of narrative texts. (Shifting the Paradigm: Feminism and Narratology 54).

Diengott refers to Hrushovski's work in mapping the various ways of studying literature[5] and maintains that the narrow definition of narratology is authentic and that it necessarily excludes a role for gender concerns:

> As to the role of gender in the construction of theory, I do not understand how it is an issue. The structuralist-inspired narrative poetics with which I am familiar and which constitutes Lanser's frame of reference as well as the main body of narrative theory - those of Genette, Prince, Chatman, Bal, Rimmon-Kenan, to mention the most

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[5]Diengott points out Hrushovski's distinction between theoretical and descriptive poetics:

> Poetics is the systematic study of literature as literature ... [and] as in any science, it is necessary to distinguish between a theoretical and a descriptive branch of poetics. Theoretical Poetics (or "Theory of Literature") involves a theoretical activity, the construction of a system built according to the logic of a question or a set of questions. On the other hand, Descriptive Poetics is a scholarly activity involving an exhaustive study of the literary aspects of certain specific works of literature. (Poetics, Criticism, Science XV).

> famous ones - are indeed gender indifferent. (Narratology and Feminism 45).

Lanser's concept of feminist (and "womanist" and "mujerista", recognising that some commentators place great emphasis on the correct use of this terminology) narratology introduces ideological-rhetorical concerns in what some consider a purely theoretical, discourse oriented and structuralist discipline. She recognises that the established definition of narratology must be expanded if it is to accommodate her interests. Diengott, in contrast, is an example of the narrative specialists who are reluctant to accept this expanded definition of structuralist narratology.

For those who accept the broadened definition of narratology, *1 Samuel* 1 is a pivotal text. A female figure in conflict with her female rival, is at the source of the royal dynasties of Saul and David, which in turn dominate the entire narrative history of the Hebrew Bible. Hannah is one of the seminal figures of the Hebrew Bible narrative and therefore the *1 Samuel* 1 passage is popular with feminist commentators. Other commentators tend to deal briefly with this exposition to a much larger narrative. For many, Hannah and her rival Peninah are obscured by their conspicuous successors.

The *1 Samuel* 1 passage contains an account of a female character who interacts with another female character to play a positive and pivotal role in the history of her nation and in the creator's interaction with the entire creation. This may seem in tension, at first reading, with the (common feminist) notion that the biblical record is a strongly patriarchal utterance, issuing from a male dominated society. Athalya Brenner in her book *The Israelite Woman*, exemplifies this particular feminist stance:

> I find the story of the garden an extremely difficult and frightening topic to discuss. It is one of the best known and most written about passages of the Old Testament. Most readers either view it as a cliche of male chauvinistic attitude, or as a justification for these same attitudes. It is well nigh impossible to contemplate such an important literary opus objectively. One tends to read into it ideological conceptions and biased opinions. (123)

The intensity of Brenner's polemic illustrates an important characteristic of feminist narratology in examining biblical passages, its tendency to focus on expository origin stories

which are pivotal in the development of the larger narrative but are also seminal in the development of modern ideologies. These seminal narratives have a strong feminine (though not feminist) role or figure, for example: Adam-Eve, or the baby Moses with his mother and sister and his royal foster mother, or Ruth-Naomi, or Hannah-Peninah etc. In the exclusively Christian texts one finds Mary-Jesus. The NT account of the origins of Paul are remarkable because of the complete absence of any feminine element, an omission which might appear deliberate and which is likely to figure in feminist and womanist criticism.

Feminist or womanist narratology, which is often applied to the *1 Samuel* 1 passage, resembles a rhetorical approach to the entire text. It is a hybrid of narratology and rhetoric, being subject oriented, unlike a purely structuralist, object oriented approach. In the convention of narratology, an examination of the text begins with a scheme of the entire text and works down to smaller elements and this pattern is common to feminist and other ideological variations of narratology. One should note that this hybrid methodology is not unique to feminism or womanism, but is common to all ideological approaches to a text, including the theological, which use the tools of narratology. When the narrative account in *1 Samuel* 1 is examined through the mediation of a feminist or womanist oriented narratological

commentator, an audience in the actual world is given information extracted from an ancient text. This process begs the question; 'What is the original source of this extracted material?' and therefore, 'What was the motivation for originally including material of this type? This is especially true for the study of biblical narrative with its strong tradition of historical or source oriented studies.

In the case of Hannah and Peninah, a question may be raised: why were these matriarchal figures given such prominence in a patriarchal milieu by an author? Questions such as this lead to a consideration of authorial voices in the actual world, as in rhetoric. The commentator Jo Ann Hackett, in *The Women's Bible Commentary*, exemplifies the process of extraction in this case. While she states that "The books of Samuel are organised around the careers of Samuel, Saul, and David." (85), she goes on to extract material from the narrative which suits her purposes:

> The books of 1 and 2 *Samuel* are gold mines for readers interested in women of ancient Israel. (85)

and

> ... one can collect important information about women's lives scattered throughout the books of Samuel. (86).

The logical extension of her methodology is to consider the actual, historical sources of the text, as in rhetoric.

In spite of the overt emphasis on certain elements in the narrative structure, the commentator establishes a current set of priorities and extracts or "mines" material relevant to it for application to an actual world audience. An example of such an approach to *1 Samuel* 1 which uses some of the tools of narratology, is found in the book *Helpmates, Harlots, Heroes* by Alice Bellis. Her examination of the text begins with a reference to the larger narrative, "Hannah's story is told in 1 Sam. 1:1-20." (140). She also relates the smaller text she has isolated to a larger narrative tradition, "In some ways, it is a typical Hebrew birth of a hero story." (140) and she also relates it to parallel subtexts within the body of biblical Hebrew narrative, "Like Sarah, Rebekah, and Rachel, Hannah is initially barren ... Hannah's plight is exacerbated by ... Peninah ... Their rivalry recalls that of Sarah and Hagar as well as the conflict between Rachel and Leah. (140-141). In addition, Bellis concludes her examination of the *1 Samuel* 1 text by placing it within a collection of larger narrative texts:

> Thus, just as the story of the exodus begins with women who pave the way for Moses, so the story of

> the monarchy begins with a woman whose faith leads to Samuel, Saul, David, and others. (142).

The approach in Bellis' article to the narrative text uses the primary method of narratology; beginning with an examination of the entire, larger narrative rather than constructing a picture of the whole from smaller elements. However, the approach also differs from simple narratology in one crucial respect: although the entire narrative is always kept in sight, only a pattern of elements relevant to the commentator is discussed. An ideological matrix is imposed on the entire narrative, so that the commentator actually examines less than the whole. (These constraints quite overtly guide the approach; see the title of the book). This can be compared to beginning with the entire narrative shot full of holes as opposed to broken into constituent pieces, as in discourse analysis. From the entire narrative, a network of elements is sketched out according to the demands of the commentator's ideological stance and therefore, many elements are de-emphasised, while others are foregrounded. This can be contrasted with Brueggemann who inquires:

> From whence comes Samuel? How did this king maker and king breaker appear? ... The answer is that behind Samuel stands Hannah ... Israel's monarchy,

> we are told, begins with this. (*First and Second Samuel*, 233-234).

But in Brueggemann's case, the examination of the feminine Hannah does not terminate the discussion. Rather, the commentator is interested in a larger community of characters. Hannah is discussed but is ultimately placed in relationship to her son, various monarchs (successful and unsuccessful) and her entire nation.

5. Post-structural, Deconstructionist approaches to *1 Samuel* 1:

Peter Miscall's Post-structuralist approach: Peter Miscall's literary reading of *1 Samuel; 1 Samuel, a Literary Reading*, is a good example of the application of post-structuralist methodologies to biblical narratives in general and to *1 Samuel* in particular. Miscall begins by describing the wide variety of approaches commonly applied to biblical texts:

> Contemporary literary criticism does not offer a single well-defined methodology or group of approaches that may differ in focus or type of meaning sought but is similar in presuppositions and goals. The contemporary critical scene is marked by division and debate as different

> schools, critics and journals vie with one another for acceptance of their wares in the critical marketplace. The debate can be polemical and acrimonious, since what is at stake is not always a matter of varying focus or type of meaning but at times is the question of meaning and its possibility and determinacy. (xix).

The modern structuralist and formalist approaches to literature are acknowledged as significant starting points in understanding the text, but Miscall looks beyond them for more information than they can offer:

> ... the various approaches do share one technique - the close reading and painstaking observation of the text or texts being studied, the unswerving attention to the physical and literal text, the careful noting of what actually is and is not said. The dividing line comes when something more is made of the close and detailed reading, when the "So what?" is addressed. ... Does the actual text with all its details and lacunae support meaning, or does the text undermine meaning, render it problematic and indeterminate? (xix).
>
> [According to most approaches] a text always has

> an essential meaning, whether it is called author's intention, deep structure, archetype, or historical function. The meaning is established and argued for on the basis of textual evidence; contrary textual evidence is excluded, because it is "ornamental," "mere rhetoric," or due to an editorial revision or addition. A deconstructive critic may then read the text and give prominence to just those features excluded by previous interpretations; I frequently do this in my analysis of 1 Samuel. (xx - xxi).

The most difficult aspect to understand of Miscall's approach, at least to the uninitiated, is the treatment of meaning. Post-structuralist or deconstructionist methodologies gravitate towards meaning which is problematic or indeterminate. Anne Jefferson describes the process:

> A deconstructionist reading tries to bring out the logic of the text's language as opposed to the logic of the author's claims. It will tease out the text's implied presuppositions and point out (inevitable) contradictions in them. (118).

The result is meaning which traditional methodologies cannot identify and which is discovered and analyzed and usually

extended. This reactive approach, consisting of doing what others have not, is similar to feminist and other ideological approaches which identify most precisely those meanings which are less relevant to more traditional studies. The similarities are so great that the various post-structural methodologies are often placed together in a single category. Exum and Clines, for example, call them "new criticisms" (16).

One characteristic of these *new criticisms*, is the tendency to identify a voice of the text which speaks to a universal audience, which allows the textual voice to speak, by intention, to modern readers. This is distinct from the structuralist and formalist approaches where the narrator and narratee are identified within the textual domain, or in the case of rhetoric, within a historical relationship with the narrator. Miscall relates the message of the text to "we, the readers" rather than to 'they the narratees':

> We as readers are privileged, since we both see and hear; we are presented with the "true" situation and know what we are seeing and how to judge it. (13).

Miscall analyses the text by explaining the essential structural elements present in the opening of the narrative,

which is mainly the characters and their dramatic situations. This is immediately followed by an explanation of meaning:

> Barrenness is an appropriate beginning to a birth story in OT narrative. Specifically, the fact of two wives, one barren and one fertile, is reminiscent of and analogous to Sarah and Hagar, Rachel and Leah. The latter are here inserted into the text, and it will not be surprising to encounter other and more extendable parallels to them, especially Rachel. (1).

... and the study of *1 Samuel* 1 continues with a discussion of numerous analogous texts and narrative traditions, but with little close examination of the original text. For example, the account of Elkanah's family eating a religious feast together;

> The birth story is marked by the theme of eating and drinking, food and drink; this is a ubiquitous theme in 1 Samuel and in most of the OT narrative. (11).

and the entire birth story is summarised;

> This is a *metonymic dispersion*, already encountered in the reflex of Moses' birth story

> ... A text is repeated and altered. Many of the themes and words of the "first text" reoccur, but they are in a different order with a different context, emphasis, and significance. (13).

The commentator's attention is directed away from the origins and structure of the text under consideration, to meaning which is not exclusive to one text. In another similar examination of *1 Samuel* 1, "Moses and David: Myth and Monarchy", Miscall places general meaning before individual text as his basic premise, the title referring to parallel passages with related meaning. Even when dealing with the base text, he extends his reach away from the narrative; "Even if this is the birth of a child of destiny, what is he destined for?" (190).

This pattern is repeated as the study of *1 Samuel* progresses. The reading of the text leads to meaning which is in turn related to information not found in the text and not necessarily a part of its ancient source materials and traditions. The original text is lost in the pursuit of inter- and extra-textual meaning.

6. Formalist and Bakhtinian approaches to *I Samuel* 1:

a. Robert Polzin's approach:

A convenient way of approaching a Bakhtinian analysis of O.T

texts is by way of contrast with traditional source criticism. Source criticism regards each extant text as the repository of numerous pre-texts. The text as a whole, in consequence, is considered as a compilation of earlier subtexts. The Bakhtinian view is that a text is first and foremost an utterance emanating from a voice. Pre-textual sources are consequently understood as embedded or subordinate individual utterances or voices within the global utterance or voice.

Polzin's Bakhtinian analysis of *1 Samuel* 1 in *Samuel and the Deuteronomist*, begins, accordingly, with the identification of the voices within the text:

> Whom do we hear speaking? Obviously the narrator's voice ... the characters quoted by the narrator are only three ... no other obvious voices are heard in the story. (18-19).

and:

> What is the voice of the narrator like, and what accents characterise it? The narrator's words, which at first glance appear to be one-dimensional and ideologically unified, contain a variety of hidden voices and competing viewpoints. Here, as in any artfully constructed narrative, is found a profound speech diversity that in fact is the

determining factor of its prose style. (19).

Polzin continues his examination of the voices in *1 Samuel* 1 by moving from major voices to minor ones, beyond those that are easily heard, looking for hidden voices, 'concealed reported speech',(19). Polzin next moves to the ideological positions of the voices he has identified within the text:

> The most important aspect of the narrator's voice, as of any voice we encounter in the text, is its ideological perspective. By ideology or ideological perspective I mean, in Bakhtin's words, "a specific point of view on the world," a specific belief system or form "for conceptualising the world in words, specific world views, each characterised by its own object, meanings and values." (21).

To Polzin, *1 Samuel 1* is a precursor of what is to come in the *Samuel-Kings* narratives, and a summary of what has already happened in the biblical history of Israel. It is "Ideology Backward and Forward." (26) The text is double voiced when the ideological positions of the voices are examined:

> Seen in this way, the voices we hear in chapter 1,

> those of the narrator and the characters, take on a dual accent that reverberates backward and forward on the question of the kingship of Israel. The expository material in verses 1-8 deepens in significance both as a depiction of Israel before the establishment of monarchy and as background material about Elkanah's family life before the birth of Samuel. (26).

and:

> Elkanah's words reverberate with the narrator's characterisation of Israel in the pre monarchic period [which preceded the events of *1 Samuel* 1] ... once again we see how profoundly double voiced biblical discourse can be ... The question about kingship [the future] reraised here in *I Samuel* will be looked at in magnificent detail and with shifting perspectives in the coming books. (30).

Polzin's discovery of historical-rhetorical perspectives in the voices of the text leads to an obvious conclusion; *1 Samuel* is more than a stilted heroic epic. Although he doesn't use the bakhtinian term 'novelised'[4], Polzin does follow Bakhtin's methodology in showing some reasons why *1*

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[4]See Bakhtin's "Epic an Novel" and "From the Prehistory Novelistic Discourse" in *The Dialogic Imagination*.

Samuel is more than a folk epic' from a pre-literate culture, captured for posterity by a scribe. The complex interactions of the voices in the opening chapter show a well developed characterisation and rhetorical structure which is found only in the literature of literate cultures. Elements at the beginning of the book are intricately interwoven with other elements found in the same text and in related texts. This composition is impossible to imagine in large oral narratives presented from memory. The historical biblical narratives are literature of a literate society, novelised epics.

It might be useful to conclude this section by comparing the role of voice(s) in rhetorical, narratological and bakhtinian models. Rhetoric, at its most basic level, identifies the one persuasive global voice of the text and the intended audience of the persuasive effort. The rhetorical equivalent to the bakhtinian utterance is the persuasive voice of the author or global narrator, which renders the entire text as a rhetorical utterance. To this one voice is added the audience and between these two human parties, the persuasion, the strategy of the persuader.

'The term "folk" and the possibility of oral origins for the text is taken from Rentdorff's comments on *1 Samuel 1*; "Even in the final stages of the text we probably have to do not only with readers, but above all with listeners to stories that were read aloud - or perhaps even recited from memory." (137 footnote) and "Interest is no longer concentrated on the 'original' often 'folk,' utterances." (143).

As with the Bakhtinian approach, narratology too identifies a plurality of voices in the text: the narrator, the characters and optionally, the narratees. But the Bakhtinian approach is the only one to study the intricate interrelations between them, including stylisation, polemics and inversion, and to correlate each voice or relation between voices with an ideological position or tension. It is also the only one to single out the phenomenon of double voicedness, where some of the words uttered by the narrator actually stem from one of the characters and are used in either a straightforward or an ironic-parodic manner.

7. David Jobling's approach: multiple contexts, multiple messages

David Jobling has published a number of articles with references to *1 Samuel* 1. An examination of any one of these reveals something of his approach to biblical narrative, but a more complete picture of it can be found in the examination of three of his articles, "Hannah's Desire", "Ruth finds a home: Canon, Politics, Method" and "What, if anything, is 1 Samuel." A consideration of all three articles together demonstrates Jobling's emphasis on how the scholar's perspective strongly influences the interpretation. He examines various approaches to the *1 Samuel* 1 text to show how each approach reveals distinct

elements in the text and thus leads to a unique interpretation.

a. An overview of the three relevant articles: In the article entitled "Hannah's Desire", Jobling presents an examination of Hannah's story, largely from *1 Samuel* 1. The article is divided into five sections with the following titles; -1 What Does Hannah want? -2 What does the narrator want? -3 What does Luke want? -4 What do the interpreters want? -5 What do I want? The progression of thought builds up to a critique of various literary approaches to the *1 Samuel* 1 narrative (section 4):

> I shall be dealing not with interpretation of 1 Samuel in general, but with readings under the general rubric of "literary" interpretation, most particularly those of Robert Alter, Lyle Eslinger, and Robert Polzin. (Hannah's Desire, 26-7).

The conclusion (section 5) is an apologetic for an ideological, largely feminist approach to biblical narrative:

> First then, we do not isolate our work from political discourse; rather, we see our interpretation of the Bible as fully embedded in

the political. (Hannah's Desire, 29).

David Jobling's "Ruth Finds a Home: Canon, Politics, Method" presents a largely formalist approach to OT narrative. His analysis begins with *1 Samuel* 1 but it also examines the book of *Ruth*. Hannah's story in *1 Samuel* 1 is positioned in the Christian OT canons in relationship to *Ruth*, and from this, the entire canon is approached as a singular work of literature:

> My initial purpose was to focus attention on the beginning of 1 Samuel, and to suggest that our reading of it *as a new beginning* has a profound effect on how we read the larger narrative. (Ruth Finds a Home, 125)

In Jobling's analysis, significant meaning in the *1 Samuel* 1 narrative is found via typological and formal relationships between narratives. Instead of concentrating on a single narrative, or examining several narratives with a structuralist approach, Jobling examines common codes and patterns, the invariants of a family of narratives, emphasising the various ways in which these are presented. In "Ruth Finds a Home", Hannah's story in *1 Samuel* 1 is treated as a prominent member within a selection of OT narratives which are related because they contain similar structural patterns and elements. It is these formal

elements which the Hannah narrative has in common with other OT narratives which makes it a candidate for Jobling's analysis, and not merely its intrinsic features. Meaning is discovered from an examination of textual elements within a typological family.

In "What, if anything, is 1 Samuel?", Jobling examines how the division of individual books, within the biblical canon, influences how they are read. In the specific case of *1 Samuel*, ch 1 can be read as a forward looking exposition, the beginning of an extensive narrative history, or a retrospective bridging passage. The inclusion or exclusion of the small book of *Ruth* leads to different conclusions about where *1 Samuel* is located in the larger historical narrative.

> My title .. has to do with where you draw the lines. This essay will concentrate on the drawing of just one line - the line which makes the beginning of Samuel (or 1 Samuel) *into* a beginning. It is a line common to both canons [Christian and Masoretic]. But even this statement needs qualification. In the Masoretic canon, the line is drawn between Samuel and Judges, but in the Christian canons, Ruth intervenes at this point. (What, if anything, is

1 Samuel? 18-19).[a]

This is presented as an example of how the reader's approach influences the final interpretation.

Jobling also states that his reading of *1 Samuel* is not simply literary in the sense of structuralism or formalism, but ideological:

> But it is not the purpose of this essay simply to compare different readings on their literary merits (whatever that may mean). My context is a highly politicised literary criticism, much under the impact of feminist, Marxist, and psychoanalytic criticism, as this has been related to the Bible through feminist and liberation theologies. When I speak of "the difference it makes", I mean the political difference. When I

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[a]Rolf Rentdorff also examines this issue of backward and forward readings in his article "The Birth of the Deliverer: "The Childhood of Samuel" Story in Its Literary Framework".

I should like rather to discuss the way an individual text, which itself already has a number of different strata, is interwoven into its wider context, and what this means for its interpretation (135) ... I should like to consider the way this unit of text is interwoven both with what goes before and what comes afterward (136) ... [the readers] will understand it in its narrative context. And it is immediately preceded by the final sentence in the book of *Judges*: "In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did what was right in his own eyes" (137).

> speak of the canonisers' "power" over reading, I mean political power. (What, if anything, is 1 Samuel?, 20)

Therefore, the choice of approach to the text has political implications under Jobling's interpretive method and as a consequence, it will have implications for current ideological concerns.

b. Jobling's reading of the text

One kind of approach to *1 Samuel* 1 which Jobling examines is *inner textual*, which examines only the narrative elements which are within the narrated world. In this case, the approach to the narrative is to examine it as a structure dominated by an internal, controlling agenda. The entire plot is presented as an extension of the main character's (Hannah's) pursuit of her desired object (a son Samuel). Hannah's agenda influences the way in which story elements are foregrounded or backgrounded, since every element has a degree of relevance to the primary agenda:

> [Hannah] can respond only by doing what is right in her own eyes! Does she want to dedicate her son to the shrine as a way of intervening in the appalling situation there? Does she go further, and make a connection between the national

> situation and her own? Does she connect the power of a priest to use women at a shrine in whatever way he wishes with the power of any man to marry several wives and play them off against each other as he wishes? Does she look for fundamental systemic change for the benefit of her sex? (Hannah's Desire, 22).

Jobling continues his study of the narrative by examining the narrator's dominant agenda. This is compared and contrasted with Hannah's agenda and Hannah's story is read through the narrator's interpretive rubric:

> Hannah, like any other character, belongs to the narrator, the storyteller. I have no access to her except through the narrator's telling. When I read her my way, am I claiming that my reading corresponds to what the narrator wanted? My answer is "No"; what my Hannah wants is not necessarily what the narrator wants her to want. But it falls within the range of what he (my gendering is deliberate), willingly or unwillingly, permits her to want. (Hannah's Desire, 22)

Jobling also examines several readings that go beyond the

individual text. One of these types of approaches is *co-textual*, where the notion of an isolated text with an *inner-textual*, controlling agenda, changes to become that of a text embedded in a wider sequence which functions as an interpretive rubric, a device which presents the reader with a hermeneutical lens which influences the interpretation of the individual narratives. Jobling also examines the *inter-textual* approaches in which the *1 Samuel* narrative is read as a part of a larger canon. The designated position of a text within a canon leads to a reading through the interpretive matrix imposed by that canon. The *inter-textual* canon can be distinguished from the *co-textual* narrative environment by proximity. The adjacent, Hebrew-language co-texts are chapters in a largely unified historical cycle. An *inter-textual* reading is presented by Jobling, by examining the reading of Hannah's story through the interpretive lens of the *Gospel of Luke*, which is far removed from *1 Samuel* 1 in historical, linguistic and religious contexts of origin. An *inter-textual* reading of the birth story of Samuel through the lens of the birth story of Jesus, as found in *Luke*, leads to an examination of the type scene of miraculous birth stories which are found within the Christian canon and are therefore significant to Christian tradition.*

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*In contrast, Rentdorff presents a co-textual examination of miraculous birth stories from related passages of OT narrative:

Jobling avoids the use of source oriented criticism, in common with other literary specialists who employ literary approaches to biblical narrative. However, Jobling's concern with 'literary effects' is unusual in the study of the Bible, because it is more extreme and thorough going than many of the approaches commonly encountered:

> This essay makes what must seem, to historical-critical sensibility, an extreme claim on behalf of the literary autonomy of the text ... (Ruth Finds a Home, 136).

This 'extreme claim' extends to the level of canon studies The entire canon is read as a literary text, so that historical-critical concerns are not immediately relevant, even for studies of the canon. As Jobling points out, his approach is similar to that of Northrop Frye[10], with his

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For the reader of this story in its "canonical" context (or for the listeners to it), this is a "signal." It inevitably calls to mind the fortunes of the matriarchs - first and foremost the fortunes of Jacob's two wives, Leah and Rachel, whose destinies were shaped by the same situation and its problems (Gens. 29:31ff). But we are told that the other matriarchs as well, Sarah and Rebekah, were also initially childless (Genesis 16ff.'25:21). The story of Samson's birth too (Judges 13 belongs to the whole complex of what is being called to mind here. (The Birth of the Deliverer, 136-7)

[10]Northrop Frye uses the traditional Protestant biblical canon as a unified literary text:

... "the Bible" has traditionally been read as a unity, and has influenced Western imagination as a unity. (1982

interest in the entire canon as a unitary literary work. He believes that the literary study of the biblical canon is both overlooked and important:

> My decision to take up the issue of canon has political aspects. Any literary study of the Bible must deal in some way with the issue of the whole and the parts; my inclination here and elsewhere, to give priority to a sense of the whole, rather than to close reading, goes against the main trend. But is it merely a matter of taste? In the case of the Bible, 'the whole' is in some sense the canon, and it is surely as *canon* that the Bible has its unique cultural power. Yet there has been very little serious examination of canons as literary works. (Ruth Finds a Home, 138-9).

Finally, Jobling examines the *1 Samuel* 1 narrative through

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xiii).

He comments on the historical, source oriented approach to the Bible:

My sequence is not historical - in fact it is practically the reverse of historical. The [historical-critical] mode ... is the descriptive mode, as we may call it, the one in which we are reading to get information about something in the world outside the book. Here we have the structure, the structure of what is being described and the structure of the words describing it. (1990 p4).

approaches that emphasise contemporary reader responses. This includes other specialists in biblical narrative, who are designated 'literary interpreters',

> I shall be dealing not with interpretations of 1 Samuel in general, but with readings under the general rubric of "literary" interpretation, most particularly those of Robert Alter, Lyle Eslinger, and Robert Polzin." (Hannah's Desire, 26-7).

Jobling also discusses his own ideological reading of the text as "What do I Want?". His reading is openly contemporary and political, "First, then, we do not insulate our work from political discourse; rather, we see our interpretation of the Bible as fully embedded in the Bible." (Hannah's Desire, 29). More specifically, Jobling's reading of the text is feminist:

> But in what way is my reading feminist? Most obviously, in taking up a woman's story, and seeking out the noteworthy and positive features of her character and influence ... I am well aware that I have created [Hannah] in the image of modern women. But such projection into the past of possibilities which only present experience reveals is surely a necessary part of this "recuperative" aspect of feminism. (Hannah's

Desire, 30)

and

> But my reading is feminist at another level. It is based on a fundamental choice determined by feminist theology ... Feminist analysis sees divine "mystery" as part of a strategy of mystification whereby structures of oppression are ascribed to "the will of God" or to "nature." (Hannah's Desire, 31).

Therefore, while favoring his own feminist reading of the *1 Samuel* 1 narrative, Jobling also illustrates how each approach to the text influences the final interpretation. To a great extent, the reader's initial approach determines what is read.

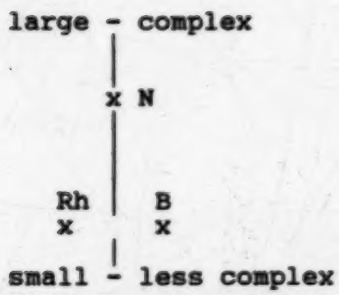
II. Conclusion:

A. Some essential distinctions between rhetorical, structural and formalist approaches:

Rhetorical, structuralist and formalist-bakhtinian approaches to biblical narrative literature share a conceptual relationship and can be illustrated in a schematic diagram. The location of any approach to biblical narrative within this pattern can be determined by two criteria, which provide two dimensions, so that each can be arranged on a two dimensional grid pattern.

One of these dimensions-criteria is the smallest unit of a literary text which can be used by a particular theoretical approach in constructing a model of the text. For example, structuralist Narratology begins with a retrospective consideration of the whole text, a large and complete unit.

Formalist-bakhtinian methodologies are more difficult to place in this scheme because the basic starting elements are essential and simple rather than simply small. This is especially true with the bakhtinian concept of the essential utterance which presents a simplified, rather than fragmented picture of textual elements as a starting point for an examination of the text. In most cases, the least



complex utterances are probably small units of a text, but a large unit, such as an entire text, can be conceptualised as a single utterance. The conceptualised rendering of the text as an essential utterance is examined and analyzed so that a complex analysis is constructed from a less complex starting point, the analysis moves from less to more complex. For example Polzin begins with a question regarding a single voice, "Whom do we hear speaking?" (1989, 18) and later progresses to "Here, as in any artfully constructed narrative, is a profound speech diversity that is in fact the determining factor in its prose style." (1989, 19).

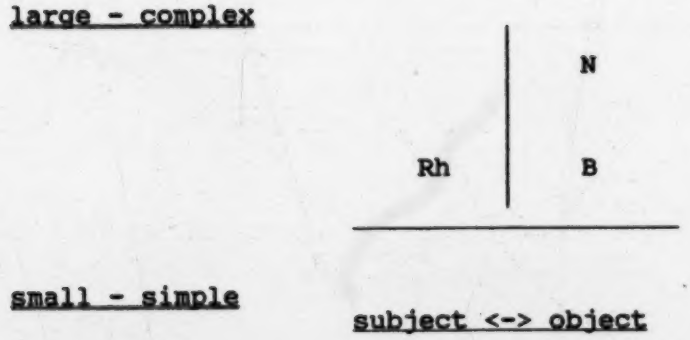
Rhetoric also commences from a consideration of the less complex elements of the narrative, although it is probably most common, in this case, that the less complex element is also small in size. A rhetorical analysis is a reconstruction of a persuasive effort. Since the sequence

of presentation is an important consideration in decoding a persuasive rhetorical argument, a rhetorical reading normally progresses from an understanding of the small elements of a narrative, in the order of presentation. For example Brueggemann progresses sequentially through four scenes.

A structuralist-narratological examination of the text would commence from a picture of the whole text. A narratological reading is retrospective, interpreting the text after it is read. For example Rosenberg begins with a reference to Hannah's significance to the entire "ensuing narrative" (124).

The other of these dimension-criteria is the basic orientation towards subjects and objects. Most structuralist and semiotic approaches deal with literary material as a collection of impersonal objects. In these cases, the relevance of human agents or subjects within the actual world is not emphasised, the text is viewed as an autonomous object. Structuralist and bakhtinian approaches are the most object oriented of the approaches considered here.

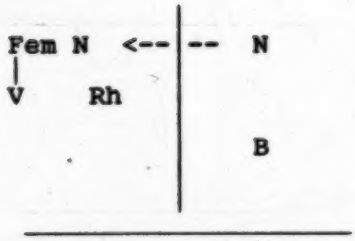
The most obviously subject oriented approach of these three approaches is Rhetoric, with its emphasis on the



relationship between an author and audience, narrator and narratee. It can be argued that the bakhtinian approach is an object oriented counterpart to Rhetoric, since it emphasises the utterance as the essential starting point, while Rhetoric emphasises the utterer and audience, or narrator and narratee. It is impossible to have one (utterance or utterer, object and subject) without the other, but the two categories of approaches to narrative literature tend to contrast in the way they emphasise one and de-emphasise the other, so they can be located on opposite poles of the subject-object diagram. This concept of subject and object orientation is complicated by the tendency of some literary specialists to stretch traditional boundaries and take a literary approach beyond its original conception.

Feminist narratology is an example of an object oriented,

large - complex



small - simple

subject <-> object

narratological approach which has been converted to a subject oriented approach. The result is something like a hybrid between narratology and rhetoric. Also, since ideological uses of the techniques of narratology tend to make use of only the parts of the text which are most relevant to the ideology, the essential starting point is a stripped down version of the complete text, rather than smaller fragments of it, as in Rhetoric, or a consideration of the entire structure, as in Narratology. For example Bellis selects meaning relevant to the story of the feminine character Hannah, from the entire narrative, "Hannah's story as told in 1 Samuel 1:1-20." (140). Other ideological varieties of narratology share the same characteristics, including the theological and the historical. In the case of structuralist narratology at least, a methodology cannot cross the subject - object dividing line without losing its form as originally conceived. The change from methodology

to ideology profoundly changes the basic nature of a structuralist approach to biblical narrative.

In many cases, a move from object to subject orientation requires an entirely new, or at least hybrid, approach. This has important implications for ideologues such as feminists, theologians and historians who value the tools of object oriented approaches but try to apply them to the interpretation of actual world phenomena, using literature as a collection of proof texts.

The size of the essential elements or 'building blocks' in a literary methodology cannot dictate what must be discovered by open ended research, but it does strongly influence how far the study will progress. Since a literary study is a kind of construction project of a limited duration, the size of the building blocks helps to determine the scope of the end product.

B. The Significance of *1 Samuel* 1 for each Approach:

A rhetorical reading of *1 Samuel* 1 would likely treat the passage as a small but vital bridge, joining larger narrative units into a rhetorical whole, since rhetorical meaning is discovered in the broad scope of the larger historical narrative passages, constructed from an

examination of smaller elements in the order of presentation. In fact this has proven to be the case, as the passage is often examined perfunctorily in a study of the larger preceding and succeeding narratives where a rhetorical orientation has been employed. For example, Brueggemann discusses the "internal dynamics" ("A Sense of a Beginning", 34) which projects meaning relevant to the divine origins of the davidic monarchy, described in the larger succeeding narrative.

A structuralist-narratological treatment of *1 Samuel* 1 would likely be similar to the rhetorical approach. The chapter is regarded as a small but important initial exposition, needed to make the larger narrative structurally complete. One important difference between the two approaches of Narratology and Rhetoric is that rhetorical meaning is not necessarily tied to specific structural patterns. A narratological reading would likely approach *1 Samuel* 1 as a starting point, the initial exposition of a succeeding narrative, without examining the semantic relationship with preceding narratives. For example, Rosenberg places *1 Samuel* at the commencement of the larger "ensuing narrative". (124). In contrast, this collation of structurally distinct narrative passages can be joined as a rhetorical construction if they are linked semantically around the *1 Samuel* 1 passage. If one pattern of rhetorical

meaning is discerned in or attributed to all the related historical narrative passages, they become a rhetorical whole, something like a novel. (For example see Brueggemann above.)

A bakhtinian reading would tend to present *1 Samuel* 1 as a seminal utterance, a bridge which is more significant than the preceding and succeeding narratives. This is because the semantically linked narrative passages would likely be seen as merely extensions or illustrations of the seminal utterance of *1 Samuel* 1, showing how the principles of the essential utterance were played out in history. For example, Polzin describes the passage 'reverberating backwards and forwards' (1989, 26).

A reading from feminist Narratology or a similar, ideologically related approach, would resemble a formalist-bakhtinian reading in that the exposition would establish the rules for reading the larger narrative. These principles of interpretation are presented and then played out in the succeeding narrative. As was shown above, any narratological approach is likely to treat the passage as an initial exposition, more important to the succeeding than preceding narratives, and not as an important bridging text. For example Bellis writes that "the story of the monarchy begins with a woman whose faith leads to Samuel, Saul,

David, and others." (142).

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Appendix:

1 Samuel 1, *New Revised Standard Version*.

There was a certain man of Ramathaim, a Zuphite from the hill country of Ephraim, whose name was Elkanah son of Jeroham son of Elihu son of Tohu son of Zuph, an Ephriamite. He had two wives; the name of the one was Hannah, and the name of the other Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children.

Now this man used to go up year by year from his town to worship and to sacrifice to the Lord of hosts at Shiloh, where the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were priests of the Lord. On the day when Elkanah sacrificed, he would give portions to his wife Peninnah and to all her sons and daughters; but to Hannah he gave a double portion, because he loved her, though the Lord had closed her womb. Her rival used to provoke her severely, to irritate her, because the Lord had closed her womb. So it went year by year; as often as she went up to the house of the Lord, she used to provoke her. Therefore Hannah wept and would not eat. Her husband Elkanah said to her, "Hannah, why do you weep? Why do you not eat? Why is your heart sad? Am I not more to you than ten sons?

After they had eaten and drunk at Shiloh, Hannah rose and presented herself before the Lord. Now Eli the priest was sitting on the seat before the doorpost of the temple of the Lord. She was deeply distressed and prayed to the Lord,

and wept bitterly. She made this vow: "O Lord of hosts, if only you will look on the misery of your servant, and remember me, and not forget your servant, but will give to your servant a male child, then I will set him before you as a nazirite until the day of his death. He shall drink neither wine nor intoxicants, and no razor shall touch his head."

As she continued praying before the Lord, Eli observed her mouth. Hannah was praying silently ; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard; therefore Eli thought she was drunk. So Eli said to her, "How long will you make a drunken spectacle of yourself? Put away your wine." But Hannah answered, "No my lord, I am a woman deeply troubled; I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have been pouring out my soul before the Lord. Do not regard your servant as a worthless woman, for I have been speaking out of my great anxiety and vexation all this time." Then Eli answered, "Go in peace; the God of Israel grant the petition you have made to him." And she said, "Let your servant find favor in your sight." Then the woman went to her quarters, ate and drank with her husband, and her countenance was sad no longer.

They rose up early in the morning and worshipped before the Lord; then they went back to their house at Ramah. Elkanah knew his wife Hannah, and the Lord remembered her. In due time, Hannah conceived and bore a son. She named him

Samuel, for she said, "I have asked him of the Lord."

The man Elkanah and all his household went up to offer to the Lord the yearly sacrifice, and pay his vow. But Hannah did not go up, for she said to her husband, "As soon as the child is weaned, I will bring him, that he may appear in the presence of the Lord, and remain there forever; I will offer him as a nazirite for all time." her husband Elkanah said to her, "Do what seems best to you, wait until you have weaned him; only - may the Lord establish his word." So the woman remained and nursed her son until she weaned him. When she had weaned him, she took him up with her, along with a three year old bull, an ephah of flour, and a skin of wine. She brought him to the house of the Lord at Shiloh; and the child was young. Then they slaughtered the bull, and they brought the child to Eli. And she said, "Oh, my lord! As you live, my lord, I am the woman who was standing here in your presence, praying to the Lord. For this child I prayed, and the Lord has granted me the petition that I made to him. Therefore I have lent him to the Lord; as long as he lives, he is given to the Lord." She left him there for the Lord.